

and others in the Office of Legal Counsel were directed to produce. He is certainly not responsible for the administration's drone policy or the decision to authorize an attack. He is a lawyer who was asked to do legal analysis for his client, the President of the United States.

Entangling David Barron's nomination with the policy of drone deployment is unfair to him and unfair to the people of Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Puerto Rico who need the vacancy on the First Circuit filled by someone as qualified as David Barron.

I believe David Barron will be an excellent judge, and that is why he has my support.

#### WRRDA CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I commend the Senate on taking final action on the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, known as WRRDA. Today's bill includes the \$310 million Boston Harbor dredging project which will deepen Boston Harbor's main navigation channels.

Boston Harbor is an economic anchor for the entire New England region, and this investment will help ensure its future as a port of world class distinction. Improving the harbor to accommodate more and larger ships will bring more jobs, more investments, and more economic activity to the harbor, extending Boston's position as a shining city upon a hill as well as on the shore.

Dredging the harbor will double the number of containers on ships coming into Boston. The project will also allow the port to accommodate ships being built to serve the expanded Panama Canal, which is planned to open next year.

The Army Corps projects that for every dollar spent on construction, there will be \$9 returned in increased economic activity, resulting in a \$2.7 billion economic benefit for the entire New England region.

I thank Chairman BOXER and Ranking Member VITTER for their hard work getting this bill over the finish line. I also thank Senator WARREN and Congressman CAPUANO, Congressman LYNCH, and the entire Massachusetts congressional delegation for their leadership and commitment in securing this vital funding.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask the courtesy of the Senator from Nevada to do a brief unanimous consent request.

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, that is fine with me.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3080

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the

vote on H.R. 3080, the WRRDA legislation, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 638, the Frank nomination, and vote on confirmation thereof; further, that there be 2 minutes for debate prior to the vote, equally divided in the usual form; further, that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action of debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, with this agreement, at 1:45 p.m., there could be as many as three rollcall votes; however, we expect only two rollcall votes.

I appreciate again the courtesy of my friend from Nevada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

#### VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, on Monday, May 26, our Nation will pause to remember all those who paid the ultimate price while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. It is a solemn day on which we recognize these brave heroes for their valor, their courage, and their commitment to our country.

As we honor and remember those who died fighting for our freedom, Congress must also remember we still have a promise to fulfill to the veterans who thankfully returned home—many with visible and invisible wounds of war. Our Nation has a proud history of caring for its wounded and disabled servicemembers and their families.

When these men and women volunteered their service, the United States guaranteed they would be cared for. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I believe that promise has not been kept.

It is no secret the Department of Veterans Affairs is facing a significant challenge with accountability at all levels of their agency. This failure of responsibility has an impact on the hundreds of thousands of veterans in my home State of Nevada.

Last month I was honored to have a number of veterans join me for a roundtable in Las Vegas. This was an opportunity for me to listen and hear their concerns. By far, nearly every veteran in attendance expressed frustrations with the VA's claims backlog and the health care they are receiving. These veterans told me they feel discouraged and hopeless, that the VA does not and will not keep its promise.

They told me about the negative impact delays in benefits and care have on veterans and their families. Such comments should come as no surprise

given the difficulties Nevada veterans are facing. Look no further than the problem of the claims backlog here in Nevada.

Although the Secretary of the VA promised there would be changes to address this problem, Nevada veterans are still waiting the longest in the Nation—up to 352 days on average—for their disability benefits claims to be processed. This is nearly three times the VA's deadline of 125 days to complete a claim.

These issues in Nevada and the allegations raised across the country are causing veterans to lose faith in the VA, and I have raised all these concerns to the Secretary in a letter I sent 2 weeks ago. I asked for immediate answers about the lack of accountability on the local level and whether VA leadership finally plans to do something about it. Although I requested a response by Wednesday, May 21, the VA still has not responded. What these problems ultimately amount to is a lack of accountability in the VA leadership.

When I questioned the Secretary at a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing last week, he agreed he was ultimately responsible for the problems with VA care and health benefits. Despite this admission and admitting that veterans are not receiving the care they were promised, he said he does not plan to resign. So my question is: If the Secretary does not plan to resign, who is held accountable in the VA?

The VA has been given enough chances to change and do better, but these were empty promises that have not produced any results. It is now up to Members of Congress to take action. That is why I have already taken a number of steps to exert oversight, demand transparency, and develop solutions to the problems facing the VA.

During last week's hearing I asked the Secretary for assurances that the audits being conducted by the VA at its medical facilities would include all of Nevada's hospitals and clinics and the results would be shared with me and the rest of our delegation. As promised by the Secretary, I look forward to receiving these results as soon as possible, and I expect substantive immediate action should Nevada have any reports of mistreatment or delayed care of veterans.

I also visited again with Las Vegas hospital officials last Friday to ensure veterans at this facility are receiving the care they have earned and that the facility is properly handling its appointment waiting times.

It is critical that the Las Vegas VA hospital constantly work to improve its services and follows recommendations from the VA inspector general so that patients do not endure long waits—like the blind female VA veteran who waited for 5 hours before being seen in the emergency room.

I believe the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee should continue to exert

oversight and hold hearings to keep VA officials accountable and transparent to Congress, veterans, and the American public.

Furthermore, I believe, now more than ever, it is time for Congress to take legislative action to fix one of the biggest challenges at the VA—the disability claims backlog.

Despite opportunities for improvement, 293,000 veterans Nationwide and 3,700 veterans in Nevada have waited over 125 days for their claims to be processed so they can get the compensation they have earned and the VA medical care they desperately need.

To address this issue I introduced the VA Backlog Working Group March 2014 Report, along with a bipartisan group of Senators, including Senators CASEY, MORAN, HEINRICH, VITTER, and TESTER. This report outlines the claims process, explains the history of the VA's claims backlog, and offers targeted solutions to help the VA develop an efficient and accurate benefits delivery system that will ensure our veterans will never again have to wait more than 125 days to receive a decision on their claims.

What our working group found was that the process is not only complex, but the backlog has been a consistent problem for more than two decades, largely because the VA is using a 1945 process in the 21st century. I sent every Member of this Chamber a copy of this report and encourage my colleagues to take a look at it to understand how we got to where we are today and what it will take to fix the claims process permanently.

To put this report's targeted solutions into action, our working group introduced the 21st Century Veterans Benefit Delivery Act. This comprehensive, bipartisan piece of legislation addresses three areas of the claims process: claims submission, VA regional office practices, and Federal agency responses to VA requests.

I thank my colleagues—Senators CASEY, MORAN, HEINRICH, VITTER, TESTER, MURKOWSKI, CARDIN, WARREN, KLOBUCHAR, WARNER, TOOMEY, THUNE, ROBERTS, and PRYOR—for joining me to address this very critical issue.

I recognize because the claims process is complex and there is no silver bullet that is going to solve this problem overnight, the VA's current efforts will not eliminate this backlog. It is commonsense, targeted solutions from Congress that will address some of the inefficiencies keeping veterans from receiving a timely decision.

That is why this bill has been endorsed by a number of veterans service organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, and the Association of the United States Navy. I thank these VSOs for their support and collaborating with the working group to develop solutions to fix this problem.

Time and again we have asked our men and women in uniform to answer

the call of duty, and they do so without hesitation. Ensuring veterans receive disability benefits and quality VA medical care in a timely manner is the least we can do to thank them for their service.

As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, it is my role and responsibility to get answers for Nevada's veterans, and I will uphold that commitment to oversight.

In the coming weeks I will be watching the VA closely for changes and improvements to mitigate the very serious lapse in care and services that have occurred. If the VA continues on the course it is currently on, then I think it is time to look for changes at the highest level.

Again, I thank all of our veterans—including the nearly 300,000 that call Nevada home—for defending this country and for preserving Americans' liberties. Their commitment and sacrifice will not be forgotten nor taken for granted.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

#### LETTER TO THE NFL

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor this afternoon to thank my colleagues who have signed on to a letter to the NFL asking that they change the name of the Washington football team. I also thank Leader REID for his leadership on this issue and for trying to accentuate the care and concern he has for 22 tribes in the State of Nevada and their interest in seeing the dignity and respect of those tribes with the name change as well.

I also come to the floor and ask my colleagues who have not signed to sign on to a letter asking the NFL to take action as aggressively as the NBA took action and to move on this issue. I will be sending a letter to each of my colleagues asking them to either sign on to this letter or to write their own letter, as one of our colleagues did. I am convinced that if each Member of this body speaks on this issue and is forceful in their resolve, we can help initiate change.

I know not everybody in America may understand why this is so important. Having personally worked with 29 tribes in the State of Washington, and for a short period of time having served as the chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, and having been a Member of that my entire time in the Senate—this may not even be the top issue in Indian Country. We certainly have understaffed hospitals, challenging school situations, decaying infrastructure challenges, and concerns about fishing rights—whether they are the challenges that ocean acidification has to our fishing ability in the Pacific Northwest or whether it is in Alaska making sure that Alaska Natives who are on subsistence fishing are able to continue to do what they do.

There are many issues in what we refer to as Indian Country that are about the health, safety, and welfare of those individuals. Yet this issue is a reminder to all of us that intolerance in our communities is a problem.

We are here to say that we respect these tribal entities that have requested this name change. We are saying that we have a trust responsibility with these organizations and these individual tribes.

So when the National Congress of American Indians—an organization that represents millions of Americans with Native American backgrounds—calls for a change, the fact that we ignore that is a disrespect to those tribal entities.

There are many organizations across the United States of America who have joined this battle as well: the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the New York State Assembly, the National Congress of American Indians, the DC city council, the Prince George's County council. Even the President of the United States has spoken out on this issue.

So what is it going to take to get the name of this team changed? I say to my colleagues that even the Patent Office—the Federal agency determining whether a word can be protected in commerce—has said this term is derogatory slang and is disparaging to Native Americans.

We believe Commissioner Goodell should act; that he needs to do what the NBA did and make sure that one of their owners puts an end to the wrong use of a football term and to join the right side of history. We are not going to give up this battle.

Similarly, like organizations who have a Web site on [changethemascot.org](http://changethemascot.org)—which is a great 2-minute to 3-minute video of why Native Americans care so much about this issue—we need to continue to respect the dignity of these individuals, and it is time to update the relationship.

Yesterday at the White House there was an unbelievable ceremony, of which I am of course very proud of—the welcoming of the world champion Seahawks football team. They were walking into the White House where many Native Americans from the State of Washington were all decked out in Seahawks gear. I don't know if it was protocol for the White House. Even though they said nobody was to take pictures, telling a crowd from Seattle not to use digital devices is pretty hard to accomplish.

But there they were—Native Americans from our State who are partners with the Seattle Seahawks. They are advertising partners. They are suite owners. They advertise and participate together. The logo of the Seahawks was designed by a Native American. That is the relationship of the NFL and Native Americans today in the Pacific Northwest. Juxtapose that to here in